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FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 29 WEST 26th ST., N. Y.
NEW YORK. August 20, 1897.

{ PRICE }
5 CENTS.

Vol. II.

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TICK TACK,

THE MESSENGER BOY;
Or, Sharp Work for a Million.

By ROBERT LENNOX.



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Tick Tack, the Messenger Boy

OR,

Sharp Work for a Million.

A STORY OF NEW YORK.

By ROBERT LENNOX.

Author of "Little Jack and His Twenty Boy Firemen," "Fire Bell Dick," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW MESSENGER BOY—"TICK TACK'S" FIRST "CALL."

"WHAT name did you say?"

"Ticknor Tackton."

"Odd name," scratching it down in a big book on the desk at the Broadway and S— street office of the American District Telegraph messenger service.

A row of boys seated on a bench, all dressed in the uniform of A. D. T. messengers, all looked up at the urchin who had given the singular name and grinned.

It was one long smile, extending the whole length of the bench. For length that smile was remarkable. The messenger boys being one and all capable of contributing largely to its magnificent distance.

The big boy with the red face—Mike Kelly by name—who occupied the end of the bench gave his next neighbor a significant dig in the ribs, and the signal was promptly telegraphed all along the line.

In the window hung a large card upon which was displayed, in letters so large that the wayfaring man, or boy either, though exceedingly near-sighted, need not err therein. The familiar legend was:

"BOY WANTED."

And the boy had come.

He it was who had given Mr. Paxter, the office manager, the name Ticknor Tackton. The lad had been engaged and told to report for duty next morning.

Ticknor Tackton, the new messenger boy, had an old shrewd face. He was short and strongly built, and looked as though he could plow through the snow and mud and slush all day and never mind it.

"He'll do," said Mr. Paxter, as the boy went out casting a critical glance at the row of boys on the bench, and trying to decide from the inspection what his chances would be with them severally in case of any little personal disagreement in the future.

Tackton had assured Mr. Paxter that he knew the great city of New York from one end to the other. In fact, he had not stopped at that; with commendable modesty he had impressed the manager with the idea that what he didn't know about New York remained for some yet unknown explorer to discover. "Tackton Ticknor, dat's a find name fer a bloke, dat is," remarked Mike Kelly, the big boy at the end of the bench, as the new boy went out.

"You've got it wrong. De cart afore de hoss. It's Ticknor Tackton," corrected the boy next to Mike.

"Dat's all right. Tick Tack—wot 'er name!" said Michael.

"Tick Tack!" repeated the boys.

The abbreviation struck them favorably, and from that day the new boy was christened anew.

As "Tick Tack" he was known ever after as long as he was an "A. D. T." messenger.

All the boys had "nick-names." There was "Squibs," "Shorty," "Butts," who smoked them, and thus received the appellation, and a host of other soubriquets.

"Tick Tack," as we may as well call him from the first, as all the boys did, went home rejoiced because he had secured the situation.

He was not laboring under the hallucination that he was going to have a "picnic," to use his own words. On the contrary, he knew what the work was.

But Tick Tack was a little bread-winner—one of the industrious bees of the great hive of the big city—and he was delighted now because he would soon begin to earn money for his widowed mother and little sister.

The boy had been idle some time, and the gaunt wolf called "Want" had prowled perilously near his door for days and days—days of weary wandering and vain work-hunting for little Tick Tack.

The boy's home-coming that night was like the entrance of a bright ray of sunshine into the rooms of the tall, dismal tenement where he and his existed—not to say lived—perhaps suffered would be the better word.

The good news gave joy to the careworn mother and the little girl who called Tick Tack brother. They had eked out a livelihood by doing bead-work. Now the pittance received in the future by the boy would lighten their heavy burden.

Tick Tack was up betimes the next morning, and he reported at the office of the "A. D. T." in season.

Then he was fitted out with a suit of uniform and ready for business.

Tick Tack took his place among the other boys to wait for a call.

Then he got acquainted. He learned Mike Kelly was the boss of the bench.

"He kin fight, he kin. Don't yer git in no racket wid him, Tick Tack," admonished the boy next our little hero.

"Sho! I ain't a scared of him," said Tick Tack.

"Hear dat, Mike?" said another boy maliciously, who had overheard Tick Tack's unguarded remark.

"Hear what?" demanded the monarch of the bench.

"Dis bloke, Tick Tack, says he ain't a-scared of yer."

Michael looked at Tick Tack disdainfully.

"Wait 'til I catch him outside. Just wait an' see. Dat's all," he said.

"I ain't done nothing to yer, have I?" Tick Tack ventured to ask.

"You said yer could lick me."

"No, I didn't."

"Yes, yer did, too."

"Tain't so."

"Yer a liar!"

"Here, here! Stop that quareling there, or I'll fine you all for 'disorder in the office.' You, Ticknor, don't begin work here by picking a fuss," called out the manager.

"I'm not doing nothing," replied Tick Tack.

"You'll be doing something before long."

There was silence for a few moments. Then the street door opened cautiously, and a little swarthy-faced man with a hooked nose, small beady eyes that sparkled like those of a serpent, looked in, cast a glance all about as though to make sure there was no danger, and then glided forward to the desk.

"A sheeny," whispered Mike.

"Mine friend, I want a messenger," said the son of Abraham.

"All right; where to go?" replied the manager.

"To Wall street, No. —, with dese note."

"To Wall street, eh? Any answer?"

"No. That is, I think not, but it's possible."

"Four-forty!"

Tick Tack jumped up, for that was his number, as could be plainly read on his cap.

"Take this note to the address written on it. No answer. Look sharp!" said the manager.

He gave the boy a note which he had received from the Jew.

"Yes, sir," replied Tick Tack.

Then he was off.

The boy had made no idle boast when he claimed to be familiar with every part of the great city.

Such was the truth.

He started for Wall street.

Taking the shortest route he made quick time.

Tick Tack came to the number which was his destination.

It was in a block devoted to offices occupied by brokers, bankers and stock operators of all sorts, kinds and grades, from the men who manipulated millions to the more humble dealer in "puts and calls."

Over the door of the office which Tick Tack was to deliver the Jew's note at was a big sign. It was printed in gold letters and it looked very rich and grand.

Tick Tack read the sign thus:

"The Colorado Gold mine Syndicate."

"This is the place," said Tick Tack.

There was no mistake about that.

The number was as plain and as bright as the sign.

Tick Tack went into an outer office, and a dudish clerk, with one pen over each ear, a pencil in his teeth and a third pen in his hand, looked up from a ledger.

"Well?" severely.

"A message, sir, for Cohen & Adamson. Am I right?"

"Yes."

The clerk stabbed the inkstand with his pen and snatched the note from the boy.

"Wait, boy," he said, opening a door marked "Private Office" and vanishing.

"There wasn't to be no answer," thought the boy, but as instructed to do so ungraciously he waited.

"Come here."

It was the clerk who bristled with pens who spoke thus.

He ushered the boy into the private office.

Tick Tack opened his eyes and stared with astonishment at what he saw.

The office was handsomely furnished, and in one corner stood a couple of large boxes filled with some greyish substance, from which little veins and pockets of yellow flashed.

"Gold-ore!" thought the bright messenger boy.

Two men were at a desk. One was writing and the other was watching him. The men presented a striking contrast in point of personalities. One was tall, thin and stoop-shouldered, with a narrow, hawk-like face, cruel and crafty in its expression. The other was corpulent, ruddy and full faced. He had a genial look, but his eyes were cunning, and the lines drawn as indices of character upon his features meant that he was unscrupulous, deep and heartless.

These men were Messrs. Cohen and Adamson.

The first named and described was of Hebrew extraction.

The second man's nationality no one knew.

CHAPTER II.

TICK TACK DISCOVERS A SECRET.

"Sit down, boy, and wait a moment," said Cohen.

Tick Tack did not require a second invitation, and he at once ensconced himself in a big arm-chair with great padded sides which buried him out of sight.

The two men at the table seemed to be in a state of great excitement, and they were also evidently well pleased with something.

"There, that's done. As fine a prospectus of a speculator's scheme as was ever turned out of Wall street, Levi Cohen," said Adamson, laying down his pen.

"Vell, read it."

Adamson complied.

He read a prospectus, setting forth the advantages offered by the "Colorado Gold Mine Syndicate." The prospectus guaranteed immediate returns of fifty per cent. on all investments in stocks. It gave a statement of the monthly yield of the Colorado gold mines controlled by the syndicate which seemed fabulous, but which were duly attested. Then there was the report of the assayer, and an estimate of the approximate yield of the mine for the next five, ten, and fifteen years. The figures made Tick Tack's head whirl. He wondered how there could be so much gold in the country, and yet so many poor people live in penury and want. Tick Tack didn't know anything about political economy, but his idea was natural all the same.

"My eyes! These blokes must be awful rich. Like dooks and princes what yer reads about," the boy said mentally.

He didn't know how easy it was to build up fortunes on paper in Wall street, where soap bubble speculation schemes are constantly originated which inflate themselves on other people's money, and then burst, ruining the investors, but enriching the "promoters," who generally manage to keep just outside the pale of the law.

It seemed that the two sharks of Wall street—for such they were—had for the moment forgotten all about the messenger boy who was accidentally concealed in the big chair.

They went on talking in a confidential way.

Said Cohen:

"Vell now we have him I am sure. Mister Carrington, the English gentleman, said yesterday that he and his two brothers were about decided to take the balance of our stock representing the last million dollars of first mortgage bonds, but he wanted to hear from the agent he had sent to Colorado to investigate. As Ike Blumthal has got back and assures us he has worked the plant all right ven Mister Carrington looks over this neat little paper again, feasts his eyes on that elegant gold ore from California—and finds his agent's report from Colorado confirms our statements ve haf him I am sure."

"Yes, for a million. This is big play, Levi, and a dangerous stroke, but we may have to depart with all the fortunes made on this deal when the final discovery comes."

"True, mine friend. True enough. Vell, I thank Providence or anything that made dem so. Those Englishmen I mean. They haf a mania for investing in American gold mines."

"But one thing troubles me, Cohen."

"What is that?"

"Young Clifford! Bah! There was a milk-sop for you. Although we had employed him at a large salary as book-keeper he suddenly up and left, and you know what he said as well as I do."

"Yes. That our syndicate was not what it should be. Vy he octually had the impudence to hint it vas a swindle."

"And he's talking outside. I tell you, Cohen, there is danger to be apprehended from that young man. He may even go as far as to warn Mr. Carrington, and rob us of the million that is almost as good as ours."

"Und then I'll loose mine reputation!" wailed the Jew.

"Nonsense. You never had any reputation to lose. But I'm afraid of that man, Edward Clifford. He's an honest man, and as such I hate him. But I'd forgotten the note just brought in. Where's the messenger boy? Gone, as I live."

Adamson glanced around, and failed to see Tick Tack. The boy never knew exactly what prompted his conduct then. It seemed that an invisible power held him motionless and silent. It must have been that it was his destiny to become a humble instrument of Providence to foil a villainous scheme which had for its object the ruin of an honest man.

"Vell, read the message," said Cohen.

The other did so.

It ran thus:

"There is danger from Clifford. If you would succeed you must silence or *buy* him. He called at the Hoffman to-day to see Mr. Carrington. Draw your own inferences. Fortunately, Garrington was out and Clifford did not see him. BLUMTHAL."

Just then the dude clerk came in.

"What did you let the messenger go for?" snapped Adamson.

"I sent him in here."

"Well, he didn't wait."

The clerk muttered and placed a package of letters on the desk. Turning to go out he picked up a paper which lay on the window-sill, opened the big "blanket sheet," and glanced at it a moment.

Then he flung it carelessly, open, across the arms of the big arm-chair in which Tick Tack was curled up.

The boy was now completely concealed and covered, but the weight of news did not crush him. He was on the alert.

The bright little fellow began to comprehend that an odd chance, such as might not have occurred under similar circumstances once in a thousand times, had brought him the knowledge of a conspiracy to swindle a confiding capitalist out of a million. Tick Tack had been compelled, by the resistless power of adversity, to live in the streets, and associate with all sorts and conditions of people, and he was rough, rude, and slangy, but his brave little heart was all right—just as good and true and honest as the best dressed and richest boy in New York who had all his life been surrounded with the advantages to which our little hero was a stranger.

Tick Tack had a good mother, and she had taught her son to be honest and truthful.

"Jingo! Crickety! Dis ain't no fine racket I've got into. Why didn't I sing out an' let 'em know I was here afore they went on and give demselves dead away?" said Tick Tack to himself.

He felt that he was in for it now.

"Well, I'll see it out; wonder what they'd do if they found me here?" thought the boy.

He shuddered, for he knew the men whose secrets he had overheard were the kind of persons who do not hesitate at any crime which means money, or is prompted by self-interest.

"Hal!" cried Cohen, when the door of the outer office had closed behind the clerk of many pens and much dudishness, "Clifford must not see Carrington, or we are lost."

"Right. Blumthal is the man for the work. He is 'on the cross' and can be depended on. It's Clifford's own fault. He's got to be silenced," said Adamson, in a low and terrible tone.

"Not so loud, mine friend," and Cohen glanced at the door. "If any one should overhear us?"

"In that case the party would never go out to tell of it, that I swear."

Tick Tack trembled so he shook the newspaper that covered him.

"I'm a goner sure if they find me now," he thought.

But the two villains did not notice the rattling of the newspaper.

They were too intent on their own evil scheme.

"I'll see Blumthal at once. That will be better than to send a messenger," said Cohen.

"Very well. You know I am to meet Carrington at his rooms at the Hoffman House to-night, and conclude the deal, receive the money for the stock; I expect him here every moment to look at the ore that arrived to-day, and to examine our statements and the like."

"Vell, I'll go and find Blumthal. Mit that man on his track, Clifford won't trouble anybody long."

"I should say not."

Cohen went out.

Tick Tack only wished Adamson would go too.

He wanted to get a chance to escape from the room very badly.

But Adamson remained.

Presently a fine looking gentleman, past middle age, was ushered in.

"Ah, Mr. Carrington. Delighted to see you. Expected you. Take a seat." Adamson thus welcomed the man who was playing the fly to his spider, and walking into the web which had been spun for him.

"I have called as I promised."

"Yes, certainly. The ore has arrived. Just came from our "great bonanza quartz mine" in Colorado. Look at it. It's the richest ore in America. Beautiful—splendid, splendid."

Mr. Adamson manipulated his hands as though he wanted to warm them. He had a habit of rubbing those big grasping hands of his in that way when he was leading a fly into his net and wished to be particularly impressive.

"The English gentleman was no fool. Far from it. Indeed, he was very intelligent and refined. But the scheme of "the great Colorado gold mine syndicate" was calculated to deceive the shrewdest."

He examined the ore.

Then he looked over the statements of the company, and was convinced, for an agent whom he had sent to Colorado had wired him: "Everything all right."

CHAPTER II.

ANOTHER MESSAGE—A BATTLE ON THE STREET.

MR. CARRINGTON soon took his departure.

Before he left he said:

"You will call at the Hoffman in the morning, and I will pay you for the stock I have agreed to take."

"I thought, sir, it was understood that I was to call to-night."

"So it was, but I've an engagement, and I cannot devote this evening to business."

"Very well, sir. Act your own pleasure in the matter. At what hour shall I call?"

"At eleven."

"I will be prompt."

"Thanks. I trust this change in the time for our interview will not inconvenience you."

"Not in the least."

Then he said good-morning and took his way out.

It was almost noon.

Tick Tack wondered if the villain Adamson was not going out.

"Don't his whiskers never eat nothin'? Ain't he goin' out for lunch?" thought Tick Tack.

"They'll gimme fits. At de office there'll be a big racket for me if I ever live to get back there," he added, mentally.

The brave little fellow was troubled.

He was afraid he would be discharged, but he couldn't leave the room where he had almost involuntarily played the part of an eavesdropper now.

Noon came.

Mr. Adamson, who had busied himself at his desk after Carrington went out, then arose, and, greatly to the delight of the concealed messenger-boy, went out.

"Now, then, I'll scud," said Tick Tack.

He crept out of the big chair and started for the door.

Reaching it he paused.

"Hold on! There's the dude clerk in the t'other office. He mustn't see me, nuther," he thought.

Tick Tack cautiously opened the door.

Looking out into the front office he saw the clerk.

That spruce, pen-bristling personage was behind a railing with a ground glass front.

"I guess I can dodge him," thought Tick Tack.

So he bent down, glided through the door, and crept across to the entrance of the front office.

The clerk did not see him.

In a moment the boy was in the street.

There he drew a long breath, stretched his cramped legs, and said:

"Well, this a queer go. Glad dat eye-glass and sideboard collar didn't see me go through the office. Jingo! I wouldn't like to have

them fellows set Blumthal after me the same as they have after Edward Clifford—that was the name they called him by."

Then the boy started for the office of the "A. D. T. Co."

Just then he thought of something.

"Lordy! I am in for it. I didn't get the ticket signed to show I delivered the message," he muttered.

Then he stopped on the corner and thought awhile.

Tick Tack's reflections ran in this wise.

"Now if I go back to the office, and tell them just what detained me I'll be in real danger of my life. That manager will report my story. I'm afraid to say anything about Cohen and Adamson. What excuse shall I make?"

The boy was still pondering when an open carriage passed him.

In it he recognized Mr. Carrington whom the plotters of Wall street meant to swindle out of a million.

Beside the English gentleman was seated a beautiful young girl.

"Gracious! That's his nobs, and the young lady with him looks enough like him fer her to be his daughter. If some one don't warn that gentleman before mornin' comes again he's ruined sure. Then there'll be no more kerridge rides an' sich. Wonder if that feller Clifford is any good? Hope to gracious he'll post the Englisher. Wouldn't like to see dem fellers up in Wall street do him up."

The carriage passed up street as the messenger boy made these reflections, and as he was hastening to Broadway a man grasped him by the arm.

Tick Tack turned like a flash and found himself face to face with a small, swarthy man.

The boy recognized him.

He was the Jew who had sent him to the Wall street swindlers' den.

"Boy, vill you run an errand for me?" asked Blumthal.

"Yes, sir."

"Vell, make haste and carry this note, and here's a tollar for you if you are back in a quarter of an hour. I'll meet you in the saloon yonder."

"All right."

The man slipped a note in the boy's hand.

He read the address, and hurried away.

The name on the envelope was Edward Clifford, and the address was a number on Fifth avenue.

"Whew! I smell a mice! Blumthal has seen Cohen since he skipped out of the office where I was treed in the big arm-chair."

Tick Tack thought further.

"Now that Sheeny is puttin' up some job on Clifford just as sure as kin be. Wish I knew what was in the note. What shall I do? All this is dead wrong. I'm not a-going to help rascals, and I'll put a flea in Mr. Clifford's ear if it cost me my situation."

The messenger boy, having come to this determination, quickened his pace, and soon boarded the Sixth Avenue "L" road.

He got off at a station convenient to the number he was bound for, and ran across to Fifth avenue.

Tick Tack had no trouble to find the house.

It was a fashionable boarding house.

The boy was approaching it when three boys in "A. D. T." messenger uniform came around the adjacent corner.

"Hello! there's Tick Tack," said one.

"Dat's de bloke what takes all day to go Wall street," said another.

"He's de feller what said he could lick me," called out Mike Kelly.

He and his companions were from the Broadway office where Tick Tack had secured employment.

Our little hero recognized the three messenger boys before they spoke a word, and he knew right away that there was trouble ahead.

He knew that he would have to fight Mike Kelly, the bully of the office.

"I'm not a scared of him if the other fellows don't pitch on to me to help Mike," thought Tick Tack.

The three messenger boys came up to him.

"Said yer could lick me, eh?" cried Kelly, and as he came within reach of Tick Tack he struck him in the face.

The blow came so suddenly Tick Tack was hardly on his guard, and he slipped and went down on his knees.

Kelly rushed at him.

"I'll show yer!" he cried.

But before he could reach Tick Tack again he was up. His blood

was up, too. Right up to the fighting point, and Mike Kelly received a blow on his big red nose the very next moment that made him see stars, though there wasn't one in the sky.

He had the nose-bleed, too, and he sat down very suddenly and solidly as Tick Tack hit him.

He didn't get up right away and he blubbered.

The bully had been knocked clear out of time, and he had no further desire to cultivate the acquaintance of Tick Tack just then; the belligerent spirit was completely taken out of him.

The other boys looked astonished. They could scarcely believe that the redoubtable Michael had at last met his match. But the truth of this was so evident that they were forced to concede that it was so.

Tick Tack arose several degrees in their estimation. The boys regarded him with no little admiration.

"Yer see we thought yer wa'n't no good," said one, half apologetically.

"And that yer waz afeard ter fight," remarked another.

The blow he had received from Mike Kelly still stung the boy and made him feel ugly. It was, however, against his principles to strike an enemy when he was down, and so he did not touch Kelly while he sat on the pavement nursing his battered nose.

But if he couldn't hit Kelly now he was ready to have it out with the others, and get the trouble over with.

"You fellers may want to take it up fer de big bully what I smacked," he said.

The boys had enough evidence of Tick Tack's prowess to dissuade them from further hostilities.

"We'se got nothin' agin yer, an' Dan an' Butts is waitin' fur us over on Broadway. You come wid us an' you kin have some of de bernaners wat we're agoin' to set up," said one.

"No. I've got a message to run."

Tick Tack rang the boarding-house bell and asked for Edward Clifford.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ADVENTURE IN THE PARK.

"Not at home," was the answer received by the boy at the door of the boarding-house, in response to his inquiry for Edward Clifford.

"Where is he, miss?"

"Sure, he's gone out. I think I heard him remark that he was going up to the park."

"Is that so? I wish I know'd what he looked like so I could find him, for this message is mighty particular."

"Faith, and you couldn't miss him. He's an iligent young man an' it's a pleasant word he has for every one in the house. He's tall and—and— But what am I tryin' to tell ye his looks for. Sure, an' I can't tell ye plainer than to say he's the handsomest young man in the whole city."

"Is he a dude?"

"No."

"Well, I'll risk the park an' if I don't strike him by good luck, I'll come back again."

With this Tick Tack hurried away, leaving the Irish girl staring after him in the door.

The messenger boy wanted to earn the dollar promised him, but he meant to earn it honestly.

He soon reached the park at the Broadway entrance. Tick Tack a few moments later was sauntering along the walk inside the park and engaged in looking out for a strikingly handsome young man when he heard a cry of alarm.

The succeeding moment a runaway team came in sight, bowling along down the park drive straight toward Broadway.

The horses were splendid, spirited animals, and quite wild with terror.

The vehicle to which they were attached was an elegant landau.

In this carriage were seated but two persons, for the driver had fallen from his seat.

The reins trailed on the ground, and there was no hand to grasp them or stay the headlong flight of the runaways.

The occupants of the carriage, who seemed to be doomed to destruction when a collision occurred, or the vehicle was overturned, were a man and a young girl.

The former was a handsome, distinguished looking gentleman past the middle period of life.

The girl was a beautiful blonde.

At the first sight which he obtained of the occupants of the carriage, Tick Tack recognized them.

"Jingo! Why that's Mr. Carrington!" exclaimed the messenger boy.

"Who is Mr. Carrington?" asked a voice at the lad's elbow.

He turned and saw a tall and remarkably handsome young man. The stranger looked shrewd and intelligent too.

"The man in the carriage is Mr. Carrington!" cried Tick Tack.

"And the girl. Ah, she is the beauty whom I saw on Broadway the other day. Her face has haunted me ever since," muttered the young man.

Then he threw aside his coat.

"What yer goin' ter do, young feller?" cried Tick Tack.

"Try to stop those horses. You know the people will be killed if I don't do it."

"An' you'll be killed if you do try it."

But the next instant, regardless of Tick Tack's admonition, the gallant and brave young man made a forward leap.

The horses attached to the vehicle containing Mr. Carrington and the young lady were passing.

It was in itself an achievement of skill and agility that the daring man accomplished. He succeeded in catching one of the horses by the bit-ring. But the impetus of the on-rushing team carried him off his feet. He was swung clear from the ground, but he clung to his hold with a grip of iron.

The weight of the young man was thus thrown upon the jaw of the horse. The animal could not long carry a weight of at least a hundred and seventy pounds on his jaw, and he began to stumble and rear.

The speed of the team was checked.

But the free horse dragged the other forward.

A shout went up from the throng who had witnessed the young man's daring attempt, but it was an involuntary cry of horror.

All thought he would be trampled to death under the hoofs of the affrighted team.

The young lady in the carriage who clung to the gentleman beside her cried:

"The brave fellow will be killed!"

For the instant she seemed to have forgotten her own peril.

But suddenly, while the young man still clung to the rearing, plunging runaways, a small form darted across the road.

It was Tick Tack.

A moment and he was hanging on the bit of the free horse.

The united efforts of the boy and the man brought the runaways to a halt twenty yards further on. The animals could not drag the human weight that clung so tenaciously to their heads further.

As soon as the team stopped the gentleman leaped out of the carriage, and with a glad cry his girlish companion sprung to safety in his arms.

They both knew that they undoubtedly owed their lives to the two brave spirits who still held the trembling and yet terrified horses.

"Whom have we to thank for our preservation?" asked Mr. Carrington, for he it was, and Tick Tack had made no error in his recognition.

"I am Edward Clifford, sir," said the young man.

"And my name Ticknor Tackton," piped the small voice of the messenger boy.

"I thank you both."

"We owe you our lives."

Thus said Mr. Carrington and the young lady almost at once.

"My daughter says rightly. Can I reward you? You will not feel offended. I am aware that no money can discharge my debt, but if—"

The gentleman was drawing forth a plethoric pocket-book.

"No, no, sir, I will accept nothing. My motive was purely one of humanity," said Clifford, flushing.

"But you, my boy. The money will bring some good to those you love. I know you messenger boys are hard worked and poorly paid. You will take this money?" said Mr. Carrington, and he proffered the boy a roll of bank notes.

"No, I'm only a poor boy, but I'm just as high-toned in my heart as Mr. Clifford, I am," said Tick Tack.

The gentleman smiled.

"You are certainly both heroes," he said, as his daughter took the money from his hand.

She smiled sweetly.

"It isn't polite to refuse a lady, and so you must take this money for my sake and give it to your mother, my little man," she said to Tick Tack.

"Yes—take it," advised Clifford.

"All right, if you say so. I reckon maybe I kin do something to really earn it yet," replied Tick Tack, and he thought of the plot to ruin Mr. Carrington which he had overheard.

"I think, sir," said Mr. Carrington to Edward Clifford, "that you called to see me at the Hoffman, and left your card. I remember the name, as it was Clifford."

"Yes, sir, I desired to see you on a matter of importance. I will call again before night."

"Thank you. I shall be glad to welcome you."

"And I am sure I hope this will not be our last meeting," said the beautiful girl.

She smiled upon Clifford, and he said, ardently:

"I share that wish with all my heart."

A crowd had gathered, and at this juncture a couple of park policemen and the driver who had been thrown from the seat came up. Mr. Carrington instructed the latter to return the runaways to their stable, and he drove off.

Then the gentleman and his daughter entered a public cab and were driven to their hotel.

The young girl waved her hand to Clifford as she was borne away.

The two heroes of the adventure walked away.

They soon left the crowd behind them.

Then the boy said:

"I've got a message for you. You're the stuff. Grit you are every time, and I'm glad I helped you."

"A message for me, my brave lad? It is seldom I receive one, for I am only a poor book-keeper, without a friend in New York, where I am almost a stranger. Let me have the message."

"Here it is, sir."

Tick Tack held out his small, dirty hand containing the note he had received from Blumthal.

Clifford opened the missive.

After he had read it, while Tick Tack watched the expression of his face closely, he said:

"Why, this is strange! There must be some mistake. This note is signed 'Oscar Carrington,' and that is the name of the man whom we just saved."

"What's der note about?" asked Tick Tack.

"Why, it is dated at the Hoffman House and purports to come from Mr. Carrington."

"Say, if you'll read it to me maybe you won't be sorry afterwards."

Clifford smiled at what he considered the boy's idle curiosity, but he read the note to him.

It ran thus:

HOFFMAN HOUSE, NEW YORK, June 18, 18—.

MR. EDWARD CLIFFORD:

DEAR SIR—Your card received. Regret that I did not see you. It is important that you should not call on me at this hotel again. Please meet me at No. — Elizabeth street at ten this evening. I think I know what you want and am anxious that you should not fail me. Be sure to come.

Yours sincerely,

OSCAR CARRINGTON.

"I thought so. Young feller, there's being the biggest kind of a job put up on you!" exclaimed Tick Tack, excitedly.

"How so? What do you mean, boy?"

"I'll tell you if you'll promise not to give me away."

"No harm shall come to you through any confidence you may give me."

"Then I'll open up the news budget."

"Do so and at once. You have aroused my curiosity."

"Well, in the first place, that note was written by a feller called Blumthal, a Sheeny!"

"Blumthal! Ha, the villain who is leagued with Cohen and Adamson!" exclaimed Clifford.

CHAPTER V.

THE MESSENGER BOY WORKING TO SAVE A MILLION.

"THAT'S him sure as shootin'."

"Well, tell him all you can. Why do you think there is some plot against me? I thought the villains were only seeking to involve Mr. Carrington in their toils, and I meant to warn him."

"Let's take a sit down. I've got a good deal to tell you. It's almost too queer to believe, but you can just bet it's true."

They took a seat.

Then Tick Tack went on to relate in his own peculiar, but none the less clear manner all his adventures thus far on that eventful day. In conclusion he said with a smile:

"If it goes on at this rate I reckon I'll be gray-headed before I've been a messenger boy a month."

"And so the villains, Cohen and Adamson, are informed that I mean to warn Mr. Carrington and in order to prevent my doing so they have set Blumthal on my trail. I have overheard them speak of that rascal. From what they said of him I do not think he would hesitate to accomplish my murder if he was well paid. There is a million at stake, and no money will be spared to prevent my warning Mr. Carrington," said Clifford.

"That's just it. You don't know much about ther old town of New York I guess, since yer says yer new here, but I'll give you a pointer. The place where Blumthal wants you to come to-night on Elizabeth street, is a regular den of thieves," said Tick Tack.

"The villain's purpose is plain. He seeks to decoy me into his power, that I may either be murdered or held a captive until Cohen and Adamson have worked out their plot and swindled Mr. Carrington."

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Tick Tack.

This was a pertinent and most important question, but Clifford answered it without hesitation.

He said:

"I am, if possible, more than ever determined to foil the scoundrels."

"Good! you're a brick. Knowed when I seed you jump at them horses you was the right sort. I tell you I'm in with you on this racket. I guess I can earn the money the pretty lady gave me."

"Yes, yes."

"And now I think you had better work a game on Mr. Blumthal. You just write an answer to the Sheeny and make him think you are fooled."

"I'll do so."

"Can you write it here?"

"Yes."

"Then go ahead."

Clifford produced a note book and pencil.

Upon a blank leaf he quickly wrote a reply to the forged note.

It ran thus:

"No. — FIFTH AVENUE.

"MR. OSCAR CARRINGTON—DEAR SIR: Your note just received. Will be sure to meet you at the appointed time at the place you mention.
Yours truly,

"EDWARD CLIFFORD."

He read the note to Tick Tack.

"That will do," said the boy. Clifford gave him the note, and he placed it in his pocket.

"Now you'll see Mr. Carrington and warn him sure?" said the boy.

"Yes."

"And mind you keep yer eyes wide open. Something we don't think of may go wrong, and the men who want to get rid of you may make a set at you even yet when you don't look for 'em."

"I'll be on my guard."

"You meet me at your boardin'-house at six, will yer?"

"Yes. I will do that, and before that hour I shall call upon Mr. Carrington and warn him of the plot to rob him of a million."

"Good. I'm off. Remember, six o'clock, and if we don't meet the one what keeps the 'pintment 'll know suthin' has gone wrong with the other."

"Yes."

"And the one what's at the boardin'-house at six and don't meet his partner will look fer him, eh?"

"Yes, let it so be understood. You are a very shrewd boy. I think you are just the aid I need to work for the million."

"You can go heavy on me and not lose."

Saying this Tick Tack hurried away.

He made his way straight to the saloon where Blumthal had promised to meet him.

The scoundrel was still there.

When the boy entered Blumthal was talking to a dark hook-nosed youth, whom at a glance the messenger boy recollects he had seen in the crowd which had gathered in the park when the runaway team was stopped.

Something like a suspicion flashed through the mind of the shrewd boy. But Blumthal disarmed it by saying:

"You vas gone a long time, but you ish a good poy. Jakey just come, an' he told me he saw Mr. Clifford and a messenger boy stop a runaway. Dot vas you, I suppose. You didn't find mine friend at his house, and I suppose you went to the park to find him."

"This is the boy that helped stop the runaway team," said the dark youth.

"Yes, that was me," added Tick Tack.

"Here's your answer," he added.

Then he gave Blumthal Clifford's note.

"That ish all right. I promised you fifty cents, eh?"

"No, a dollar, sir."

"Vas it a dollar? So much as dot? I think it ish a mistake on your part. Now I remember, I think it vas a quarter."

"Git out. Gimme the dollar. I've most run my legs off."

"Vell, ve von't quarrel. Here it ish."

He reluctantly gave the boy a silver dollar.

Tick Tack hastened away.

"Father, if you go on like dot, spending a whole dollar all at vonce, ve vill haf to go into bankruptcy and pay our creditors ten cents on the dollar befor the summer's gone," said the dark youth, as Tick Tack left.

"Never you mind dot, Elias. We ish working for a million. Don't gif advice to your father, Elias," answered Blumthal.

"Now you say you overheard all that vos said py the messenger poy and Clifford?"

"That's what I said. I was behind a tree when they took a seat near. The boy has dropped on to all the plant. Clifford thinks you are fooled, and before six o'clock he means to see Mr. Carrington."

"He won't see him."

"What vill you do?"

"Clifford shall never reach the Hoffman House alive."

"But in broad daylight? Take care, father, take care."

"I've men to do the business who will not hesitate."

"Who are they?"

"That ish my pissness. You go home, Elias."

"All right."

The dark youth at once quitted the saloon.

Some twenty minutes subsequently two men joined Blumthal.

A signal passed between them, and they adjourned to a private room in the rear of the saloon.

The two men who had come to meet Blumthal were as villainous a looking pair of individuals as the closest search would enable any one to find within the limits of New York city, and that is saying a great deal.

For half an hour the three conspirators remained in counsel. Money passed between them.

Blumthal was the giver, and the terrible-looking wretches who had come to meet him were the recipients.

They separated finally.

Blumthal proceeded in one direction and the two men went in an opposite course.

While these events were transpiring Clifford walked out of the park and took his way homeward.

His clothing had been torn and disordered when he was dragged by the runaway team.

He thought he would visit his room and render himself more presentable, and then repair to the Hoffman House and call on Mr. Carrington.

After he had hastened from the saloon Tick Tack made his way directly to the office, from which he had absented himself all day.

On his way there he examined and counted the money Mr. Carrington had given him, and found that the amount was sixty dollars.

Tick Tack had a five-dollar note in his hand when he at last entered the "A. D. T." office.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MESSENGER BOY AND THE MILLIONAIRE'S DAUGHTER.

MR. PAXTER, the office manager, was behind the desk when the boy entered.

He was also mad, and when Mr. Paxter permitted his angry passions to rise he got red in the face. He was red now, very red.

The messenger boys on the bench knew the symptom, and they were sure Tick Tack was in for it now.

Mike Kelly grinned and whispered.

"He'll git the sack, an' serve him right, too."

Mr. Paxter looked up and frowned severely as Tick Tack rather shame faced and hesitatingly came in.

"So! so! You are back are you? Didn't expect you to-day, you young—young wagabones!" roared the irate manager.

When he was enraged he always called the messenger boys "wagabones." Probably he meant vagabond, but then Mr. Paxter was "quite English you know."

"What have you got to say for yourself? Where's your ticket from the Wall street party? Where is it, you young wagrant wagabones?" continued Mr. Paxter.

Tick Tack fished the dirty slip of paper which should have been signed by Cohen and Adamson out of his pocket and placed it on the desk.

"Not signed! Not signed! Well this is the worst, the very worst I ever saw! Take off that uniform. Get out! Go home! You are discharged!"

"Yourer gittin' yer back up in a hurry. Can't give a feller no chance to say nothin', can yer? Dis is a nice kind of a racket, ain't it? I've been runnin' me legs off fer de company, an' de man what kept me huntin' all over the city fer a bloke what I found at last, gimme this, see?"

Thus speaking, Tick Tack planked the five dollar note he had all the time held concealed in his dirty palm down on the counter.

Mr. Paxter picked up the note, stuck his eye-glass in one of his weak eyes, and saw it was really a "fiver."

"Why didn't you say so? Not so bad for a day's work after all. You've earned five dollars to-day for the company, and they will pay you fifty cents for your day's work; not so bad, Tick Tack. Take your seat. I'll have another message for you to run in a few moments I hope," said Paxter.

"Dat ain't no consolation," grumbled Tick Tack.

Then he sat down, and Mr. Paxter turned to the perusal of a newspaper.

"That fiver saved yer," whispered one of the boys.

"Know'd it would," replied Tick Tack.

"Where yer been all day?"

"You heard me a-tellin' him."

"You wasn't runnin' all day, was yer?"

"Well, rather."

Just then there came a telephone call, and the boy who was questioning Tick-Tack was sent to answer it.

About five o'clock there was another call from Union Square, and Mr. Paxter shouted:

"Four-forty!"

That was Tick Tack's number, and he sprang up, received the address, a blank ticket, and started to answer the "call."

Tick Tack found the number.

It was a lawyer's office.

When he entered a clerk handed him a note.

"Deliver that and make haste. You see it is to go to the Hoffman House!"

"The Hoffman House. There's where the man me an' Mr. Clifford's a-goin' to save a million for hangs out. Wonder if this note means anything about that racket," said the boy to himself.

Out on the street he tried to find out by reading the address on the note.

It was:

"MISS CHERRIE CARRINGTON,

"Room 28,

"Hoffman House."

"Hello? This is right on the line of our work. I wonder if the pretty lady will see me?" the boy said.

He was not long in getting to the Hoffman House.

The note was delivered and a bell-boy ran up to Room 28 with it. Tick Tack lingered.

Presently the bell-boy returned.

"You've to come up," he said.

"All right. That suits me," thought Tick Tack.

He was conducted to the presence of the beautiful girl, who was Mr. Carrington's daughter.

The moment she saw him Miss Cherrie recognized the messenger boy.

"Oh, I'm so glad it's you!" she said.

"So am I," answered Tick Tack promptly.

"Who gave you this note?"

"Man in a lawyer's office, No. — Union Square."

"It wasn't my father?"

"No."

"I don't understand it."

"Some more of Blumthal's game I'll bet," the boy thought.

"I am afraid something is wrong," scanning the note. "This looks like my father's writing and it is signed by him."

"Yes, miss," eagerly.

"But my father never wrote the note. I am sure it is a forgery. The signature particularly is faulty."

"Thought so."

"What's that?"

"Nothing, miss. But can I help you in any way?"

"Perhaps. Let me see. When my father went out a short time ago, he said he would be back in an hour. He has a very important engagement this evening, and until time to attend to that he said he wanted to be here to meet Mr. Clifford, for he expected him to call."

"Yes."

"And now this note says my father will not be home to-night."

"Where has he gone?"

"That I cannot tell."

"Why? Don't the note tell that?"

"No. There is no explanation. That is entirely unlike father. He would not write in such a way, knowing that I would be worried."

"I see. The game is to make sure he don't see Clifford. That's the racket, you may depend on it."

"The game! Ah, what do you mean? Who can wish my father not to see Mr. Clifford?" asked the young lady.

She was very naturally perplexed, and surprised as well.

Tick Tack did not stop to think that he might awaken the fears of the young lady for her father's personal safety, and he said:

"There's an awful big game a-goin' on against your father, miss."

"Some one planning against my father! Oh! he may be in trouble, in danger, even at this moment!" exclaimed the lady, laying her hand on the boy's arm.

"No, Mr. Carrington's all right. They won't harm the goose that's to lay the golden egg," answered Tick Tack in his shrewd way.

"Oh, you have greatly alarmed me. Tell me all, everything, that I may devise some plan for my father's assistance?" implored Miss Carrington.

"I guess I'll have to let it all out to you, miss, though I didn't mean to."

"Yes, you must do so. I am in great suspense."

"Well, you see, miss, some fellers what's got a gold mine out west that ain't no good on earth is makin' a boom on it, on paper, sellin' stock on it an' makin' suckers think it's a reg'lar bonanza, what'll make 'em all richer nor Vandebilt an' sich."

"Yes; but to the point. How is my dear father interested? It seems strange that a boy like you should know all this."

"It is strange, miss. Jist as strange as kin be, and all a accident. You see your father has bit at the bait of gold. See? an' he's agreed to take a million worth of stock in the 'no good' mine. He's to pay

for it to-morrow forenoon. But me an' Clifford found out the game. Never mind just how we twigg'd it.

"Clifford an' me meant to warn your pa, and so save his money. But the fellers what's puttin' up the job found out what Clifford meant to do and tried to get him in their power but failed.

"They don't know I'm onto the racket. They think Clifford's the only one they have to fear. Now it's my idea that to make doubly sure Clifford won't meet your father and spoil their game the rascals have managed so he won't come home to see Clifford, and so won't find out the swindle until it's too late."

Thus explained the boy.

"What is to be done?"

"Clifford is to meet me at six. I'll be off and see him. He'll know how it's best to manage. He's a smart one and as brave as they make 'em. Didn't he grab them runaway horses just splendid?"

"Indeed, he did. He is a hero. Bring him to me. Despite your assurances to the contrary I fear my father is in danger and I would consult with Mr. Clifford before making my fears public."

"I'll bring Mr. Clifford here. I'm sure he'll be glad to come. Now, don't fret. It won't do a bit of good. Everything will come out all right I'm sure."

With this attempt at consolation and reassurance, the boy hastened from the hotel.

He made his way over to Fifth avenue as fast as possible. The clocks struck six just before he arrived at Clifford's boarding-house.

When Tick Tack rang the bell he was received at the door by the Irish house-maid whom he had met there before.

"Is Mr. Clifford home yet?" he asked.

"He came home some hours ago, changed his clothes and went out. He has not come back agin sure," was the girl's answer.

CHAPTER VII.

CLIFFORD DECOYED.

"ALL right," answered Tick Tack; "I'll wait on the corner and try to catch Mr. Clifford when he comes back."

He returned to the next corner and kept watch there.

But the boy was uneasy.

He reasoned shrewdly.

"What did Mr. Clifford come home and change his clothes for? To go to the Hoffman and call on Mr. Carrington, I'm sure," he thought.

Then his thoughts rambled on.

"But Clifford hasn't been to the Hoffman. There's something wrong. Ten to one Blumthal's too smart for us again. Why didn't Clifford go to the Hoffman? It must certainly be because he couldn't. And why couldn't he? Jingo! I think it's probable he has been intercepted. By whom? Nobody but Blumthal, or somebody working for him. I promised to hunt Clifford up if he wasn't here by six. It's now half-past. He won't come. Oh, I'm afeared about him! The wretches may have caught him in a trap. What shall I do? I won't go back to the Hoffman and tell my fears. Miss Carrington would be more frightened than ever if I did. But I must find Clifford, and save him, too, if he is really in trouble."

Thus mused Tick Tack, and he added mentally:

"Where shall I look for Clifford?"

For some moments the shrewd little fellow thought deeply.

All at once an idea struck him, struck him very hard, too, and he resolved to act upon it forthwith.

"I've got it! The Elizabeth street den where Blumthal wanted to make Clifford meet him, as he said in the note. I'll go there."

Tick Tack started off at once.

The night had fallen when he turned off of the Bowery, which he had first reached, and proceeded along Elizabeth street in the direction of the rendezvous which Blumthal had thought to decoy Clifford to.

Meanwhile that young man was really in peril.

His life was menaced, and desperate men were determined that he should fall.

He had been decoyed, betrayed.

But how?

We shall see.

As the girl informed Tick Tack at the boarding-house, Clifford had left that house after making his toilet.

He started for the Hoffman House.

As he was walking up the street a young woman met him on the street corner.

She was in tears and seemed dazed and lost.

Clifford was kind-hearted, and it will be remembered that he was a comparative stranger in the great city.

He pitied the girl. Her pale wan face and seeming distress moved him.

He thought of his far-off home away in the country where the hills sheltered an old New England farm-house, and of a sister like the girl there before him, and he kindly asked:

"What has occurred. You seem to be in trouble?"

"I am sir, I am," replied the girl, through her tears.

"What is it?"

"I am a poor working girl. Through a severe illness I have been thrown out of work. My little brother and I live all alone and we are wretchedly poor, and—and—my little brother is ill and—and starving—starving in the midst of plenty here in this great heartless city," said the girl.

Her voice pulsated with emotion.

Clifford listened and his sympathetic nature was more deeply moved than ever.

"If you are really in need—" he began.

"Oh, I am, sir, I am. But you can convince yourself if you would come. Only come once to our miserable home and see my little brother and you would help us," the girl hastened to say.

"Is it far?"

"Not very."

"We can take a car?"

"Yes."

Clifford looked at his watch.

"I will go with you," he said, with no thought of danger—no suspicion that he was being made the victim of a cruel imposture. A quick, satisfied light flashed in the girl's handsome eyes, but he did not see it.

The ruse was as old as the city, but the young man from the country was completely deceived, his own heart was so true, and he was not inclined to be on the lookout for duplicity in others.

Clifford was told to stop a cross-town car when he had walked some distance with the girl who had become his guide.

He did so.

They entered the car, and finally the girl bade her friend of the hour alight.

They were now on the Bowery.

The girl called Clifford's attention to something on the street and quickly led him away.

They turned off from the Bowery.

Clifford did not notice the name of the street. The girl cleverly diverted his attention until they had passed the corner.

It was a narrow, gloomy street.

Clifford did not like its looks.

The men and women they met impressed him as being low and wretched.

But he knew the poor cannot choose the location of their miserable homes.

The girl's story had prepared him to follow her into some disreputable or poverty-stricken street.

Without surprise he therefore proceeded on at the side of the decoy. But it seemed to him that they were going a long way.

"Is it much further to your dwelling-place?" he asked.

"No, only a block or so now. We shall soon arrive there. Oh, how happy I will be if you will only give me the means to procure for my poor little brother the food and medicine he needs to save his life."

"You shall have it. I will do all I can for you if all is as you say." Thus replied Clifford.

For some little distance further they proceeded in silence.

Finally the girl halted before a tall and dark tenement.

It was an old building which had passed through many stages of dilapidation.

There was a basement door.

Down three or four steps to the door the girl led Clifford.

There was something in the general appearance of the place that repelled him, and all at once he thought of turning back.

Perhaps he would have speedily carried out this thought had he

seen that as he followed the girl down the stairs to the basement a window over his head was silently opened and a dark face, the crafty face of Blumthal looked down at him.

But this Clifford did not see.

He went on.

Reaching the basement door at the foot of the stairs the girl produced a key.

In a moment she had unlocked the door, and conducted Clifford into the basement.

Then she closed the door and the young man heard her lock it.

"You have secured the door?" he asked, quickly.

"Yes. It is never safe to leave it unlocked. This is a bad neighborhood, and only necessity induces me to remain in it," replied the girl, readily.

It was very dark.

"Be seated. Here is a chair!" said the girl pushing one toward him.

He sat down.

"I will procure a light," continued the girl.

She glided away.

The succeeding moment Clifford heard a faint sound behind him.

He started to his feet.

Too late.

He received a heavy blow on the head from some blunt instrument and he fell stricken senseless.

Then came a blank.

When Clifford's senses returned he found himself lying on the floor. All was darkness, dense and impenetrable. He could discern nothing. There was a dull pain in his head, and he felt giddy. Where he was and what had occurred he soon recollects. Then he regained his feet. He felt that there was blood on his face, and that he was wounded in the head. He produced his handkerchief and bound up the wound.

The truth dawned upon the young man's mind now.

"Fool that I was. The girl must have been a tool of the villains who seek to prevent my warning Mr. Carrington of the plot to ruin him. The girl's pitiful story was all a lie, and I am entrapped and at the mercy of my unknown enemies," muttered Clifford.

He had a pistol in his pocket when he started out, but he found now that the weapon was gone.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WARNING FROM AN UNEXPECTED SOURCE.

THE discovery that he had been robbed of the only weapon he had in his possession completely disconcerted the young man.

He realized how completely he was at the mercy of those who had entrapped him.

He thought of all the strange disappearances he had heard of that had occurred in the great city.

A recollection of horrors, brought to light by the investigations of the police, came to his mind and terror seized upon him.

But Clifford was really brave, and he soon regained his composure to a degree, and strove to look the perilous situation in the face with fortitude.

One reflection afforded him satisfaction and some slight hope.

He knew that when Tick Tack at six o'clock failed to find him at his boarding-house the lad would become alarmed, and he thought he would keep his promise and hunt him up if he could.

"But what can such a mere boy do? How can he find—how save me from my enemies?" said Clifford.

He then sought to ascertain what his surroundings were, and if there was any chance for him to escape.

Groping his way through the darkness about the place, the captive soon learned that he was in a small square room without windows and with only one door, which he tried and found secured. It was impossible for Clifford to force this door, as by repeatedly making the attempt so to do he soon convinced himself.

The walls of the apartment were cold and damp, and hence Clifford decided that it was a cellar or basement room.

He listened but heard no sound.

The place was as silent as the grave.

Clifford shuddered, as he thought it might become his tomb.

The hours went by. He had no means of obtaining a light, and so he could not consult his watch to determine the time, but he knew he must have been in the prison room a long, long time, and that the night was well advanced, and yet no one came to visit him.

It was a time of terrible suspense for the imperiled young man, and he thought of many things, as people will at times of great peril, or when menaced by death.

Clifford feared that his plan to prevent the ruin of Mr. Carrington was defeated, but he still entertained a hope that Tick Tack might convey the warning which he was now powerless to carry.

The young man paced the length of his underground place of confinement nervously for a long, long time.

Frequently he paused to listen, and at last he heard a sound.

Footsteps were approaching.

Clifford foresaw that a crisis in his fate was approaching, and he took a position in a corner of the cell-like room directly opposite the door.

Life was very dear to him, and he had never prized it as highly as now when it was endangered.

He resolved that he would die in a desperate attempt at self-preservation. That he would make a heroic defense if the person or persons then approaching attacked him.

Nearer and nearer came the sound of footsteps.

They paused at the door.

Clifford heard a key grate in the lock, and he knew that the door was about to open.

The denouement of the adventure seemed surely at hand.

The door swung slowly open and the captive beheld the girl who had decoyed him there.

* * * * *

In the meantime what of Mr. Carrington?

It is necessary that the reader should be informed regarding his movements.

Before Edward Clifford left his boarding-house and met the girl who was so successful in decoying him into danger, Mr. Carrington strolled out of the Hoffman House.

He walked slowly down Broadway until he reached Union Square.

"I think I'll call and see Lawyer Randall, my old friend, whose acquaintance I made years ago in London," the gentleman said to himself.

He entered the lawyer's office which Tick Tack subsequently visited in response to a messenger call.

Mr. Carrington found his legal friend in his office, and they conversed for some time.

Carrington consulted Randall about his proposed investment in the stock of "the Colorado Gold mine Syndicate."

"It seems all right, and that the investment would be an excellent one, I admit, friend Carrington, but I would be cautious," said the lawyer.

"I sent a trusty agent to Colorado to inspect the mines, and he has telegraphed me to buy the stock. He assures me everything is all right."

"Well, in that case if your agent is reliable, you must use your own judgment," said the lawyer.

Just then a tall, shrewd-faced man entered the office.

"Ah, Bradshaw!" said the attorney.

Then he introduced Mr. Carrington, saying:

"Mr. Carrington, Mr. Bradshaw, city detective."

The gentlemen mutually acknowledged the introduction.

"What's new in your line?" carelessly asked the lawyer of Bradshaw.

"Well, I'm at work trying to unmask a great swindle. It's about as gigantic as 'the Agency for unclaimed foreign fortunes,' which I closed down on recently."

"Indeed, it's surprising what daring and cunning swindling schemes are yearly developed here. But what is this new dodge?" asked Randall.

"Well, outside of detective circles even our suspicions are as yet kept profoundly secret. But in confidence of course I don't mind telling you gentlemen about the affair."

"It will go no further."

"Certainly not."

Thus responded Mr. Randall and Carrington.

"Well, it's a Wall street soap-bubble company this time."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Carrington.

"Yes, it's a big thing, too."

"What line?"

Thus asked Randall.

"It's no railway line."

"Oh, I presumed it was."

"This time it's a gold mine fraud."

Carrington was now deeply interested, and he and Randall exchanged significant glances.

This the detective observed.

"You two look as though you had heard of this before," he said.

"My friend here is particlularly interested in what you are telling us, because he has been thinking of investing largely in the capital stock of a concern like the one you alluded to," said Randall.

"Is that possible?"

"Yes."

"Maybe it's lucky I met you to-day, Mr. Carrington."

"Possibly."

"But," he added, "what is the name of the fraudulent company you are working against in secret?"

"The Colorado Goldmine Syndicate."

Mr. Carrington started to his feet.

"Are you sure it's a fraud?"

"Positive of it, sir. I am only waiting to get more evidence before closing down on the promoters of the scheme."

"A narrow escape for you, Carrington," said Randall.

"Yes, I owe you a debt of gratitude, Mr. Bradshaw."

"Do not mention it."

"The agent you sent to Colorado must have meant to betray you," said Randall.

"Undoubtedly."

"But you are now warned in time."

"Yes, the swindlers shall never see a cent of my money."

"I fear you will not think well of promising of American investments hereafter," remarked Randall, laughing.

"And of gold mines in particular," added Bradshaw.

"I certainly shall not. It will give me great pleasure to see the scoundrels at the head of the fraudulent company brought to justice."

"No doubt. Would you consent, by the way, to appear as a witness against them?" asked the officer.

"Yes."

"Then please tell me what evidence you can give?" asked Bradshaw, eagerly.

Mr. Carrington went on to relate all the transactions he had had with Cohen & Adamson in full.

When he had concluded the officer said, jubilantly:

"Good! You are the very man I desired to find. Your evidence will positively secure the conviction of Cohen and Adamson. Without your testimony I should not have been sure of them. Now they will serve the State behind the bars."

CHAPTER IX.

A SPY OVERHEARS SOMETHING IMPORTANT.

WHEN Blumthal and the two villains who met him in the saloon parted, while one of them went to see his daughter, who was the girl who subsequently decoyed Edward Clifford into the power of his enemies, the other set out to watch the office of the A. D. T. Co.

The fellow had received his instructions.

He was to follow Tick Tack and waylay the boy.

The information brought from the park to Blumthal had of course warned him that the messenger boy knew too much.

Blumthal set out in person to shadow the Hoffman House.

Thus the cunning rascal thought he had guarded against the miscarriage of the plot of his employers as well as possible.

When Mr. Clifford left the Hoffman House to call on the lawyer, Blumthal was on the watch.

He saw the English gentleman.

"There's my man. Vere is he goin'? Well, it may be he is going to meet Carrington, and so I'll follow him."

The villain did so.

He was experienced in such work.

He was close behind Mr. Carrington all the way from the Hoffman House to the lawyer's office on Union Square.

Blumthal saw his leader enter the office of the lawyer.

Stealthily he followed him up a flight of stairs which led to the rooms of the attorney.

They were on the second floor.

After Mr. Carrington had passed into the office of Mr. Randall, Blumthal crept to the door and listened.

He was thus engaged, when he heard some one coming up the stairs.

He looked over the railing.

Then he saw and recognized Bradshaw. All the detectives were known to Blumthal, and it needed but a glance for him to make the recognition.

He did not wish to be seen.

Quickly he ascended the next flight of stairs, and paused on the landing above.

Listening there, he heard Bradshaw enter the lawyer's office. Blumthal waited a moment.

Then he stole back to the door of the attorney's rooms.

He thought it might be important that he should hear what was going on there.

He listened intently again with his ear pressed against the keyhole. The gentlemen in the office never thought of the possibility of there being an eaves-dropper at hand.

They talked quite loudly.

Blumthal heard all that passed between them.

His face darkened.

"Father Abraham! Dish is too bad! De finest little game for a villain is nipped in the bud. Now the Englishman's million is lost to my patrons, and the pigeon they meant to pluck is to be used as the principal witness to insure their conviction. So help me Moses, me heart is broken! Vat vill Rebecca say? Vat vill Jakey say? Vat vill become of my little scheme to retire from pizness an' close up the pawnshop, on the share I vas to ha'f of dot million tollar."

Thus wailed Blumthal.

He felt that he was an injured man. He longed to get even with Bradshaw for warning the villain's victim.

But just then Blumthal recognized the fact that it was important that he should lose no time in warning Cohen & Adamson of the peril they were in.

"They may haf time to get to Canada yet," the villain thought.

Then he stealthily crept down the stairs.

Out upon the street he darted.

He ran against a man who was passing.

"Blumthal!"

"Cohen!"

These exclamations fell from the lips of the two villains.

As they collided they made a mutual recognition.

Blumthal drew Cohen aside.

"The game is up," he whispered.

"What do you mean?"

"Dot pigeon has got de warning."

"Do you mean you have foiled us, and permitted Edward Clifford to warn Mr. Carrington?"

"No, no."

"What then?"

"Bradshaw did dot pizness. He warned Mr. Carrington."

"Then the officer suspects us?"

"Yes."

"How did you find this out?"

Blumthal explained.

"And you say Carrington is now in the lawyer's office?"

"Yes."

"If that man appears as a witness against us we are lost."

"Sure—if you don't run off to Canada."

"I can't do that just now. It would cause the loss of every dollar I have in the world."

"Then what will you do?"

"Carrington must be cared for."

There was a world of significant, and terrible meaning in the villain's manner.

"He must not appear as a witness against us."

"What is it worth?" asked Blumthal, and a fierce and avaricious light flashed from his tigerish eyes.

"A thousand."

"Make it two?"

"Done."

"Now for quick work, Blumthal. Listen to a plan that has just flashed through my mind."

"Yes."

"Carrington must not return to the Hoffman House."

"No."

"When he comes out follow him. Tell him you are sent by Clifford who found on his return home that he had sustained a serious injury while stopping the runaway team in the park."

"I understand."

"Induce the Englishman to enter a cab with you. You know a cabman—ay, more than one whom you can depend on in a case of this kind?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Once you get your man in the cab chloroform him, and then you can take him to 'the nest' in Elizabeth street without any trouble."

"And then what?"

"I don't mind telling you, Blumthal, that I mean to have Carrington's million yet."

"You do?"

"Certainly."

"But how?"

"With him in my power all will be easy. I mean to make the million the price of his life."

"I comprehend. It's a fine game. Beautiful. Well, I hope it will work."

"Meanwhile, when you have gone off with Carrington in the cab I'll not be idle."

"What will you do?"

"Write a note in Carrington's hand, addressed to his daughter. Have it taken to the office of Lawyer Randall, and instruct the party who conveys it there to say it was sent by Mr. Carrington, with the request that the lawyer call a messenger and have it delivered at the Hoffman House."

"Good! That is fine. Then they won't be alarmed at the hotel on account of the unexpected absence of the gentleman."

"That's it. But we must not longer remain in company."

"If Bradshaw was to see us, eh?"

"All would be lost."

"That's so, for he is the sharpest man in New York."

"Right, but we shall outwit him this time."

"So help me Moses, I hope so."

Then Cohen walked on.

Blumthal remained on the watch at the office entrance.

He saw Bradshaw come out and walk away.

The officer did not observe Blumthal save by a passing glance.

The villain seemed to be staring at a display of goods in the show window of a dry goods store.

Presently Mr. Carrington came out.

Then Blumthal approached him and began to work his part of the plot as he had been instructed.

Everything worked as Blumthal wished.

Carrington entered a cab with him.

In that vehicle, when it was on a quiet street, Blumthal suddenly seized the gentleman by the throat, and despite his struggles, strangled and chloroformed him into insensibility.

Then the cab was driven to the very house in which Clifford was subsequently entrapped. So it came about that the two men were captives under the same roof.

Meanwhile Cohen sent the forged note as he had spoken of, and we have seen how it was received by Miss Carrington.

Then Cohen hastened to apprise Adamson of the adverse turn affairs had taken.

CHAPTER X.

TICK TACK ON THE TRAIL.

The man whom Blumthal had instructed to shadow the "A. D. T." office, and follow Tick Tack meant to do so.

He arrived in the neighborhood of the office very soon after he parted with his companion at some distance from the saloon where he had met Blumthal.

The thug took a position whence he could command a good view of the door of the office.

Passing it he had assured himself that Tick Tack was inside. Blumthal had not neglected to give him an accurate description of the boy.

He recognized our little hero at a glance.

So it came about that, although he suspected it not, a deadly foe, who meant to bring him serious injury, if not death itself, was waiting for Tick Tack.

But the poor boy's good angel was watching over him.

It was not decreed that he should meet the fate Blumthal had planned for him.

The man sent to follow up the boy, when he left the office, in common with most of the dangerous class to which he belonged, had a great weakness for strong drink.

To him liquor was meat and drink.

To this failing Tick Tack owed his safety.

While the wretch was closely watching the messenger's office, and just before Tick Tack was sent to answer his last call on Union Square, a villainous looking man came slouching along the street in an aimless way.

Suddenly he saw the face of Blumthal's man. He approached and the two greeted each other as old friends.

Such they were.

They both belonged to an organized league of city brigands.

The man who accosted the spy on the watch for Tick Tack's appearance had recently served a term in prison.

This was their first meeting since the discharge of the one who had been "working for the State."

The ex-convict at once proposed that they adjourn just for a moment around the corner, where there was a beer saloon, and take a friendly drink.

The other signified that he was on duty and could not leave his post.

But the other urged that a moment or so would not matter.

The temptation was too great to be resisted.

The other yielded.

The two men went to the saloon.

While they were there Tick Tack left the office.

Thus it was that the man set to trail him down missed him.

Thus it was that the brave little fellow was free to search for Edward Clifford.

Meanwhile after Blumthal succeeded in abducting Mr. Carrington in the bold and desperate manner related, and after the female decoy had led the young book-keeper into the trap set for him the villains Cohen, Adamson and Blumthal met in a low grogery not far from the den on Elizabeth street, which now held their two captives.

The rascals compared notes.

Blumthal's man, who had missed Tick Tack, so reported.

"Well," said Cohen, when Blumthal told him this, "we've only the messenger boy to fear just now."

"That's so, and as he is only a boy, there is no great danger to be apprehended I think," said Adamson."

"Well, I don't know 'bout dot?" said Blumthal.

"Why? Do you fear the boy?"

"He is the sharpest boy in Ni York."

"Well, he has no one to help him now. He'll not trouble us," said Cohen.

"We vill hope not," assented Blumthal.

Just then the girl who had served as a decoy to lead Edward Clifford into peril came into the saloon.

She was really a depraved creature, though rather attractive in face and form.

Her father, who had abducted Mr. Carrington, lived in the basement of the house where the Elizabeth street den was located.

The girl was called Caroline Kemp, but she was known among her associates as "Cal."

She had been drinking, for her father had given her a few dollars to reward her for her success in capturing Clifford.

The girl passed Blumthal and his friends, and took a seat at a table in the rear end of the saloon.

She was known there as an excellent customer, and when she presently ordered wine it was promptly served.

The girl drank a number of times, and finally she seemed to fall asleep.

Meanwhile Blumthal and the plotting swindlers with whom he was leagued continued their conversation.

"Yes," said Cohen, presently, "we must hold Carrington a prisoner until we can make our arrangements for flight. He shall never appear as a witness against us."

"No," assented Adamson. "And when we are ready for flight we will terrify Carrington into giving us an order on his London banker for all the money he has there."

"We had best make sure of the money and get the draft cashed at once. There will be a hue and cry over the disappearance of such a man as Carrington, and payment of any drafts of his may be stopped," advised Cohen.

"Dot ish right," said Blumthal.

The German Jew believed with Cohen, that "a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush."

"Yes," he added, "dot vos de proper game."

"You are right, Cohen. For a moment when I suggested delay I forgot the contingency you mention," assented Adamson.

"Then there's no time like the present."

"That's so."

"Vell, gentlemen, s'pose ve interview dat prisoner," said Blumthal.

"Yes. We will have a talk with Mr. Carrington," said Cohen.

"Now?" asked Adamson.

"Yes. At once. We must have the draft or check to-night and deposit it for collection in the morning."

"I know vere I can got dat cashed vor ten per cent. disgound. My fadder-in-law, Levi Rosenthal, the diamond dealer does a little bizness on dat line," said Blumthal.

"Well, try Rosenthal. Better give him ten per cent. than take chances. Eh, Cohen?" asked Adamson.

"Yes, ready money is what we must have now," Cohen rejoined.

Then the three scoundrels arose and left the saloon.

Not more than five minutes elapsed after their departure, and they had only just passed into the den in which Mr. Carrington and Edward Clifford were prisoners, when the door of the saloon opened and a bootblack, with his box containing brushes and outfit slung over his shoulder, entered.

His face was dirty and an old cap was pulled down over his eyes.

An observer could hardly see his features.

"Shine! Shine 'em up, sir?" piped the boy, in a shrill voice, as he glanced about the place.

"Naw! Git out!" said the East-side bar-tender, in the well-known dialect of a "tough."

"Hold on. Gimme er beer—I've got the nickel," said the boy, and he placed the coin on the bar.

It was no rare thing for little bootblacks and newsboys to buy beer there, and the bar-tender didn't care how often he violated the law which forbade the sale of intoxicants to minors, only so he got their pennies.

He gave the lad a glass of beer. The urchin took it to the rear of the room and sat down at a table not far from Cal Kemp to drink it.

Meanwhile, from under the front piece of the cap that concealed his eyes, the boy took a good look at the somewhat inebriated young woman.

Finally he arose and went out.

Not long after the boy took his departure from the saloon, the girl walked or rather reeled out, and directed her uncertain steps to the den where she lived.

She opened the door by means of a key and went inside. But then the drink she had taken completely overpowered her, and she sank down on a lounge and dropped asleep on the instant.

But she had not locked the door.

* * * * *

When Cohen, Adamson and Blumthal, after leaving the saloon repaired to the den in which Mr. Carrington and Edward Clifford were prisoners, they were admitted there by Kemp, "Cal's" father.

"We want to interview the old gent," said Cohen.

"All right. He's up stairs. Come along, gentlemen, come along," responded Kemp.

He took up a lamp and led the way up a flight of stairs.

It was while the party were "interviewing" Mr. Carrington that Cal Kemp returned home intoxicated, and admitted herself, by means of a pass key, as we have seen.

A moment or so after she sank on the lounge in a drunken sleep, the door opened and the boot-black we saw at the saloon glided into the room.

He was really Tick Tack, the brave messenger boy.

CHAPTER XI.

TICK TACK PROVES A HERO, AND THE SHARP WORK FOR A MILLION ENDS.

We previously left Tick Tack making his way along Elizabeth street, in the direction of the den in which the victims of the swindlers' plot were imprisoned.

The boy was on the alert.

He knew the den to which Blumthal had invited Edward Clifford.

Reaching its neighborhood the cunning lad bought an entire outfit from a bootblack, and traded his hat and coat for the cap and tattered jacket of the other.

He was afraid he would be recognized by Blumthal or some of his friends.

Tick Tack resolved to watch the house awhile, and see what would come of it. He had once dwelt in the neighborhood and he knew Cal Kemp and her father by sight. It was while he resided in this neighborhood that he found out what he knew about the den kept by the Kemps.

Tick Tack concealed himself in an arched doorway directly opposite Kemp's place, and kept his eyes and ears open.

The boy waited there. At last, however, his patient watch was rewarded.

He saw Cal Kemp issue forth and go to the saloon. The messenger boy followed her, and looking in at the window where the ground glass was worn off, he saw Cohen, Adamson and Blumthal.

They had come to the saloon, while the boy watched Kemp's house.

"Here they are, the whole drove of 'em mostly. I'll bet I'm right, and that Ned Clifford's a prisoner in Kemp's place," thought the boy.

He did not dare risk going into the saloon then.

He was afraid the sharp-eyed and cunning Blumthal would penetrate his attempt to conceal his identity under the garb of the bootblack.

But when they went out Tick Tack was near, and he saw the three men enter the place he thought Edward Clifford was held a captive in.

It then occurred to the boy that he might find out something definite by entering the place in which Cal Kemp remained.

Moreover the boy was not quite sure of the girl, and he wanted to get a good look at her in the lighted saloon that there might be no mistake as to her identity.

Something like a feasible plan of action was developing itself in the messenger boy's brain.

We have seen what he did in the saloon.

When he went out he no longer entertained a doubt regarding the identity of the girl.

He had positively convinced himself about her while he scanned her face as he sat near her and pretended to drink his beer.

"Now, then, if she is only drunk enough to let me slip into the house with her when she goes home without seeing me I may find Clifford all right yet," reflected the boy when he found himself outside of the saloon.

Then he muttered:

"I wonder if the two revolvers I bought on the Bowery as I came along are all right, an' ready fer use?"

He pulled a pair of six-shooters out of his pocket and examined them.

The weapons seemed to be all right—loaded and in order. Tick Tack thought he could rely on them.

He remained alert and watchful near the saloon until Cal Kemp issued forth from it.

Then as the girl reeled homeward the messenger boy followed her. He was close behind Cal when she entered the basement.

He heard her fall on the lounge, and then he tried the door, and as we have seen it yielded, and thus unsuspected he gained an entrance to the den.

Knowing, as he did, that Blumthal and the swindlers who had

called the villain into their service were in the house, Tick Tack was fully alive to the peril of his venture.

"Now, then, I'm inside all right, an' der next thing is to find Clifford," said the boy to himself.

Then he picked up the key to the door which Cal Kemp had dropped on the floor, turned it in the lock, thus securing the door, and as there was no light in the room he grouped his way to a table, felt about in search of a lamp.

He found one and quietly lighted it. Then he opened one of two doors in the rear wall, and found a closet containing a number of Cal's dresses.

He heard some one moving about up-stairs, and as he meant to explore the house the sight of the wardrobe he had stumbled upon gave him the idea to impersonate Cal.

Quickly, while he grinned as he thought what he meant to do seemed rather funny, Tick Tack slipped on one of Cal's gowns over his own garments, and then taking the shawl which she wore thrown over her head he put it on.

Next he dragged Cal into the closet and closed the door on her.

Not much noise was made in doing this, for the girl was too deeply intoxicated to offer resistance, though she muttered complainingly in an incoherent way.

"Now to explore the place. I'll take in the basement first, for the men I want to steer clear of are up-stairs," thought Tick Tack.

Then he passed through a door next to the one to the closet, and holding the shawl over his head so as to well-nigh conceal his face, he advanced with the lamp in his disengaged hand.

He was very nearly the height of Cal Kemp, and at the first glance one familiar with her appearance might have taken the boy for her.

Through a passage the boy advanced until he came to a door in the rear of the basement; there he paused and listened.

He heard some one pacing up and down like a caged animal, and he saw a key hanging on a nail beside the door.

"I'll chance it," he said, mentally, and then, taking the key from the nail he unlocked the door and opened it. He beheld Edward Clifford; but we know that Clifford supposed his visitor was the girl who had betrayed him.

What then was the surprise of the young man when he saw his visitor throw aside the shawl and reveal the face of Tick Tack, the messenger boy.

He sprang forward and grasped the hand of the brave and cunning little fellow.

"Come, I've found yer, let's git out!" his voice broke and he almost whimpered. He felt the reaction after all his excitement.

"Brave little chap," said Clifford, and the messenger boy led him out of the dungeon which might have been his tomb.

They did not speak or stop for an instant until they were out of the house.

They reached the street in safety and Tick Tack, said:

"I told yer I'd hunt yer up if yer weren't there at six, an' I done it, didn't I?"

There were tears in his eyes, and he wondered what made him cry. Clifford was moved as deeply.

[THE END.]

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"Brave, noble heart! Your friendship is the true metal. God bless you—God bless you!" he said, and his own voice trembled.

"What's the matter wid you? You're out, ain't yer?" said Tick Tack, and all his buoyancy returned.

"Now, then," he went on, "we've jist got fer to hustle, we has. Mr. Carrington is in there."

"In that terrible den? Then he must be rescued!" exclaimed Clifford.

"That's it. We'll git the perlice."

"Yes."

"Then come along."

Tick Tack hurried Clifford to the corner of Broadway.

There, by a lucky accident, they chanced to find two policemen, for there was a gin-shop on that corner.

Clifford told the officers what he wanted.

They called two more blue-coats to their assistance.

Then Tick Tack and Clifford led the officers back to the den whence the latter had escaped.

The door had been unlocked, and so left by Tick Tack.

The men they wanted to capture were still up stairs.

They entered the basement. The policemen pulled off their boots and crept up the stairs.

There they discovered Mr. Carrington, bound to a chair, and surrounded by his enemies, who threatened to kill him unless he signed a check they wanted.

The police suddenly burst into the room.

The three villains tried to escape, but they were overpowered by the officers and all three handcuffed.

Then Tick Tack and Clifford entered.

"Dis vos all along off dot poy, I pet me, so help me Moses!" groaned Blumthal.

"That's where yer dead right, Sheeny," retorted Tick Tack.

Then Mr. Carrington was released, and the party hastened away, while the police officers removed the prisoners.

Clifford explained everything to Mr. Carrington, and that gentleman said:

"There has been sharp work for a million on both sides, but you have won, and I hope the future will enable me to prove my gratitude to you both."

And now we have little more to add.

The swindlers were tried, convicted and sent to prison. Blumthal shared their fate, and the last words he uttered as he was hurried away to Sing Sing were:

"It ish all along off dot poy, so help me Moses!"

Mr. Carrington insisted that Tick Tack's future should be his charge, and he sent him to an excellent school for boys, while his mother and sister were also well cared for. Tick Tack had made a friend who would insure his success in life.

Clifford entered the service of Mr. Carrington as general manager of the extensive business in which the millionaire was engaged in England and America.

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